

Ephesians 4:4-10 Answers Unity in Diversity

Overview:

The letter to the saints in Ephesus can be divided into two parts:

Chapters 1-3 are theological (doctrine/belief); chapters 4-6 are practical (duty/behavior)

Chapters 1-3 concern the Wealth of the Believer; chapters 4-6 concern the Walk of the Believer.

Introduction:

Ephesians 4:1-6 is about unity. In 4:7-16 Paul reveals how God equips this unified body with spiritual gifts that help maintain the unity.

****** Based on 4:1-6, why should we be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit (4:3)?** Paul's reasoning seems to be that we should maintain unity since there is one body, Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God (4:4-6). Here is a clear case of one's beliefs determining his behavior.

Teacher's Note: Since time allotted for last's week's lesson did not allow for a thorough look at 4:4-6, it is being done this week. There is thus an over-lap between lessons.

— One Body —

1. What did Paul mean by there being one body (4:4)? See 1:23, 2:16, 3:6, 5:23, 1 Corinthians 10:17, Colossians 3:15. All believers, Jew and Gentile alike, now belong to one body of believers ~ the church.

ESV **Ephesians 5:23** . . . Christ is the head of the church, his body . . .

ESV **Colossians 3:15** . . . you were called in one body.

Joke: The next time somebody asks you what church you belong to, say, "Is there more than one?"

Ecclesiology: There is only one church. Of course there are local expressions of the one church (such as the church in Ephesus), but in we must ever keep in mind that there is, in the grand scheme of things, only one church. This truth transcends denominations. Our unity comes from the fact that there is but one church, one body of Christ. With regard to the meaning of the Lord's Supper, Paul wrote:

NIV **1 Corinthians 10:17** Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

— One Spirit —

2. To what one Spirit did Paul refer (4:4)? *See 1 Corinthians 12:13.* The one Spirit is the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in us all.

ESV **1 Corinthians 12:13** . . . in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

— One Hope —

3. It says that one hope belongs to our call. What one hope do we all share that belongs to our call (4:4)? *See 1:11-14, 18.* Biblical hope is a confident expectation. We have the confident expectation of the possession of a heavenly inheritance (eternal life, the redemption of our bodies, reward for our obedience to Christ, etc.). All Christians have the same hope; it is not different for each one or each ethnic group.

— One Lord —

4. Who is our one Lord (4:5)? *See 1:2, 3, 15, 17, 3:11, Romans 10:9.* The one Lord would be none other than the Lord Jesus.

ESV **Romans 10:9** . . . if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved . . .

This one Lord is the same Lord for the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Pentecostals, the Baptists and even people who meet in house churches.

— One Faith—

5. What is the one faith that we all have (4:5)? *See 1:15, 2:8, Romans 10:9, Acts 4:12.* It is saving faith, the Christian faith, faith in the sinless life of Jesus, His atoning death on the cross and the His bodily resurrection.

ESV **John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Application: There is only one way of salvation: By grace through faith unto good works.

— One Baptism —

6. What one baptism do all believers experience (4:5)? *See 1 Corinthians 12:13.* This could refer to the baptism of the Spirit (spiritual baptism) that each believer experiences at the moment of salvation. However, it may refer to the water baptism that each believer is supposed to undergo upon his profession of faith.

ESV **1 Corinthians 12:13** . . . in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . .

— One God —

Hardest question of the day: How many gods are there (4:6)? There is only one God. This is called **monotheism**.

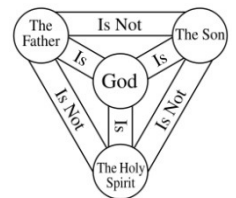
ESV **Deuteronomy 6:4** "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

What popular, made in America religion is not monotheistic, but polytheistic? The Mormons are polytheists. They hold that God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Ghost are three separate, distinct gods. One Mormon website frankly admits, "Mormons believe there are three Gods" (www.mormonchurch.com/668/are-mormons-polytheists; accessed 04/26/13).

7. What evidence for the Trinity is found in 4:4-6? We read of one Spirit, one Lord (Jesus) and one God the Father. Each Person of the Trinity is fully God, each is distinct from the other, yet there is only one God. He is a tri-unity (Father, Son and Spirit). We are compelled by the Christian truth to declare that each distinct Person is God and that the deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory, co-equal in majesty.

Joke: The Trinity decided to take a vacation. The Holy Spirit suggested, "Let's go to New York City!" The Father said, "The people there are very liberal and they might call me the Heavenly Mother, and I don't want to deal with that right now." The Spirit then said, "Let's go to Jerusalem instead!" The Son replied, "I didn't have a good experience last time I was there and I'm not ready to go back just yet." Finally the Father and Son suggested, "Let's go to Nashville, headquarters for the Southern Baptist Convention." "Perfect" cried the Holy Spirit, "I've never been *there* before!"

Athanasian Creed: The Trinity is a mystery which cannot be comprehended by human reason but is understood only through faith. It has been quipped that if you try to understand it you will lose your mind, but if you deny it you'll lost your soul. It is probably best confessed in the words of the Athanasian Creed. Though the creed is man-made and not inspired, it expresses the Trinity in a way most Christians have agreed with for well over a millennium. It states that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons or dividing the divine being.



The creed continues, stating that the Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Spirit is God: And yet there are not three gods, but one God. We must worship the Trinity in unity and the one God in three persons.

The Father thought (predestined) our salvation, the Son bought (purchased) our salvation and the Spirit wrought (applied) our salvation (Hendriksen, p. 188).

Some people object to the word Trinity since the word itself is not in the Bible. Many religious words that Christians use are not in the Bible. The word Bible is not in the Bible; neither is missionary, rapture or millennium.

Unitarianism: The polar opposite of Trinitarianism is Unitarianism (originally espoused by a church leader named Arius in the A.D. 300s and condemned as a false doctrine). It is advocated today by

both the Jehovah's Witness and Unitarian Universalists who teach that since there is only one God (the Father), neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit could be God.

Oneness Pentecost: The Oneness Pentecostals are guilty of a heresy called Modalism. They rightly teach there is only one God, but deny that He exists in three persons. Unlike Unitarians, they teach that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are indeed God, but are merely different manifestations of God the Father. It would be as if a man were a father to his son, a son to his father and a husband to his wife (yet just one man with one person acting in different capacities). Oneness Pentecostals also usually require water baptism in order to be saved and see speaking in tongues as a required evidence of salvation.

How did Paul describe our one God (4:6)? He described our one God as the Father who is over all, through all and in all (Jew and Gentile alike).

8. Paul's appeal is for unity. How does the fact that God is over all and through all and in all provide a basis for unity (4:6)? God is not remote. He pervades all things, sustaining everything. The idea seems to be, *How can there be disunity when God is over (epi), thru (dia) and in (en) all?*

Transition: In the next few verses (4:7-10), Paul will explain how God equips this one, unified body through a diversity of spiritual gifts.

******9. According to 4:7-10, what gift did Christ give each of us? See Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7, 14.** Christ gave every believer the gift of grace to be able to live out 4:1-2. We certainly need the grace! Also implied is that each of us is given a grace gift from Christ, a spiritual gift, to enable us to serve the church.

Structure: The "but" (*de*, 4:7) is a strong adversative that means to the contrary or on the other hand. Verses 1-6 deal with the unity of the church, "but" within this unity there is a great diversity of spiritual gifts, all given to help unify the church. There is the "each one" (4:7) versus the "all" (4:6). "Paul thus moves from the unity of believers to the uniqueness of believers" (MacArthur, p. 134).

ESV 1 Corinthians 12:14 . . . the body does not consist of one member but of many.

ESV 1 Corinthians 12:7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good, especially in relation to unity . . .

Every believer has grace from Jesus in the form of a spiritual gift that helps to be unified. Here are some examples:

ESV Romans 12:6-8 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

ESV 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 . . . there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

Verse 8 is a quotation from somewhere; what is it from? It was a quotation of Psalm 68:18, written by King David to proclaim God's triumph and victory.

10. What evidence is there for the deity of Christ in 4:7-8? *See Psalm 68:18.* Psalm 68 is about and directed to God, the Lord, the Almighty and yet Paul applied it to Christ.

11. When did Christ ascend on high (4:8)? *See Acts 1:1-11.* The ascension of Christ occurred forty days after his resurrection from the dead.

12. It says that, associated with His ascension, Christ gave gifts to men (4:8). What gifts did Christ give that is connected to His ascension? *See John 16:7-11, Acts 1:4-5, 2:1-4, 16-18.* Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. With the coming of the Spirit came various spiritual gifts, such as visions, prophecy, tongues, etc.).

Teacher's Note: Be aware that there is a difference in wording between Paul's Greek version of Psalm 68:18 and our English Old Testament version (it concerns if gifts are being given by God or to God). Either Paul took inspired literary license in changing it or (more likely) the Hebrew text from which the ESV is translated is inferior to the text Paul used. Other texts extant in Paul's day (Syriac and Aramaic) read the same way Paul quoted it.

What is the answer to the question in 4:9? The answer is yes, Christ also descended into the lower regions.

13. Where did Jesus go when He descended into the "lower regions"(4:9)? *See John 1:1,14, 3:13, 6:38.* Paul himself told us what he meant: the earth itself is the lower region (compared to heaven; see the ESV). The second person of the Trinity, the eternal Word, became flesh and dwelt among us here on earth. He descended from heaven to earth. As the song says, "He came from heaven to earth, to show the way".

A Weekend In Hell ~ Not! Some people misunderstand where Jesus' soul was while His body was in the tomb. They erroneously say that He went to Hell and was tormented there during that time. This is probably because the Apostle's Creed states that after he died, Jesus "descended into hell." The English word hell was historically used to translate both the Greek word *hades* (the abode of all the dead) and also the Greek word *Gahanna* (a place of torment for the wicked). Thus "hell" had varied meanings. Hades (the Hebrew parallel is *sheol*) is simply the abode of the dead; it is where disembodied souls go after the body dies. In Hebrew thinking, everyone who died went to Hades (*sheol*), the abode of the dead. If you were righteous, Hades was a place of delight. If you were wicked, Hades was a place of torment. Hades was a catch-all term. Jesus did not go to hell in the sense of fire and brimstone while his body was in the tomb. Rather, Jesus passed as a ghost into the abode of ghosts. Jesus called it Paradise when talking to the thief on the cross.

14. Who are these captives that Jesus led (4:8)? See 1:19-21. Paul did not elaborate on that part of the Psalm. Some people think this simply means heaven and that the captives are demons, Jesus' defeated foes, **1:19-21**.

Others speculate differently. In Hebrew thinking, every person who dies goes to *sheol* (the abode of the dead). *Sheol* was divided into two compartments: paradise for the righteous and torment for the wicked. They theorize that after his crucifixion and before his ascension, Jesus went to the paradise section of *sheol* (a temporary holding tank for Old Testament saints). Now that their sins had been paid for by his death on the cross, Jesus released the righteous Old Testament saints from paradise and led them with Him back into heaven.

15. Verses 9-10 constitute a parenthetical remark. What is the point of 4:9-10? Perhaps the point is that just as surely as Jesus descended to earth and was here in person, he also ascended back into heaven and gave His people the gift of grace (through the Holy Spirit).

16. According to 4:10, Jesus ascended "that he might fill all things". What does it mean for Jesus to fill all things (4:10)? See 1:22-23, 3:19b, 4:11-13. Evidently Jesus' purpose is to fill the church, His body, with His presence through Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.

17. Comparing 4:10 back to 4:6, what hint is there of the deity of Christ? Both God the Father and Christ are associated with filling all things.

So What?

18. How do the ministry gifts Christ gave you help maintain unity (4:7, 16)?

Applications:

1. Since we worship one God, we His people are to be one body.
2. Unity requires maintenance. Christ gave us the gift of grace to help us live out 4:1-3.
3. Within the diversity of the Trinity there is unity. So also Christ gave us a diversity of gifts to help the church maintain unity.
4. Just as surely as Jesus Ascended and ascended, so too He sent us spiritual gifts.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

Teacher's note: These lessons are based on the ESV and are designed for 45 minute sessions. If you can hand out or email out each lesson's questions a week in advance it will encourage people to think about the passage during the week. Coving each question in class will give importance to the questions and give incentive for the class to spend time preparing for the discussion.

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